

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00  
CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00  
PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 SY-05 A-01 OPR-02 OC-06 CCO-00  
AID-05 TRSE-00 HA-05 SCS-06 CA-01 /081 W  
-----023817 141706Z /61

O 141630Z JUL 78  
FM AMEMBASSY MADRID  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5336  
INFO AMCONSUL BORDEAUX  
AMEMBASSY BONN  
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS  
AMEMBASSY LISBON  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY OSLO  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE  
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BRUSSELS ALSO FOR USEEC

E.O. 11652: N.A.  
TAGS: PINS, PINT, SP  
SUBJECT: BASQUE SITREP, JULY 14

REF: MADRID 7963

1. SUMMARY: THE ONLY SERIOUS PUBLIC ORDER INCIDENT  
IN THE BASQUE REGION JULY 13 WAS PERPETRATED BY THE  
POLICE THEMSELVES, WHEN A COMPANY OF ARMED POLICE  
SENT TO REINFORCE UNITS AROUND THE SAN SEBASTIAN  
SUBURB OF RENTERIA CHARGED, EVIDENTLY WITHOUT PROVO-  
CATION, THROUGH LARGELY DESERTED DOWNTOWN RENTERIA  
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BREAKING STORE AND PRIVATE DWELLING WINDOWS AND  
LOOTING SOME STORE FRONTS. CONSIDERABLE PROPERTY  
DAMAGE RESULTED, BUT NO INJURIES WERE REPORTED. THE  
GOVT REACTED IMMEDIATELY, PROMISING STERN DISCIPLINARY  
MEASURES, AND IT WAS REPORTED EARLY JULY 14 THAT THE  
CAPTAIN IN CHARGE OF THE COMPANY IN QUESTION ALREADY  
HAD BEEN RELIEVED, AS HAVE BEEN THE COMMANDERS OF THE

ARMED POLICE IN PAMPLONA AND SAN SEBASTIAN. AMCONSUL BILBAO REPORTS THAT THE BASQUE REGION APPEARS CALM EARLY JULY 14, WITH RENTERIA CONTINUING TO BE THE ONLY TROUBLE SPOT. TRAINS ARE OPERATING NORMALLY AND THE MAIN HIGHWAYS, INCLUDING THE SUPER-HIGHWAY TO THE BORDER, ARE OPEN; ONLY HIGHWAY N-1 THROUGH RENTERIA IS CLOSED. END SUMMARY.

2. THE BEHAVIOR OF THE ARMED POLICE UNIT CAME AS A SHOCK TO EVERYONE, INCLUDING THE RESIDENTS OF DOWNTOWN RENTERIA, WHO THOUGHT AT FIRST THAT THE VANDALISM WAS BEING COMMITTED BY DEMONSTRATORS. MEMBERS OF THE COMPANY REPORTEDLY EVEN LOOTED A NUMBER OF STORE FRONTS, AFTER BREAKING NUMEROUS WINDOWS WITH GUN BUTTS AND FIRING OFF RUBBER BULLETS THROUGH UPSTAIRS WINDOWS, LATER TO SMASH THE STOLEN MERCHANDISE BY THROWING IT FROM THEIR DEPARTING JEEPS. AN OFFICIAL NOTE FROM THE CIVIL GOVERNOR OF GUIPUZCOA DENOUNCED THE ACT, AS DID INTERIOR MINISTER MARTIN VILLA, WHO TERMED THE BEHAVIOR OF THE UNIT "INCOMPREHENSIBLE AND GRAVE" DURING AN UNUSUAL PRESS CONFERENCE JULY 13 OVER NATIONAL TELEVISION.

3. DURING THE TELEVISED INTERVIEW, MARTIN VILLA STATED INTER ALIA THAT:

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-- HE HAD MET EARLIER IN THE DAY WITH ARMED POLICE CHIEF TIMON DE LARA, WHO FULLY AGREED THAT THE MATTER MUST BE CLEARED UP AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. DECISIONS ON THE MEASURES ADOPTED WOULD BE ANNOUNCED JULY 14. "I AM AGAINST PURGES, BUT THAT DOES NOT MEAN THOSE RESPONSIBLE WILL NOT BE HELD TO ACCOUNT, ALTHOUGH THIS WILL BE ACCOMPLISHED WITHOUT POLITICIZING THE MATTER...THESE PROBLEMS MUST BE RESOLVED WITHIN THE PROFESSIONAL FRAMEWORK IN WHICH THEY OCCUR."

-- WHILE IT IS NECESSARY CRITICALLY TO EXAMINE THE EVENTS OF THE PREVIOUS DAYS, BEGINNING IN PAMPLONA, ONE ALSO HAS TO FOCUS ON THE PROVOCATIONS THAT HAD CAUSED OR CONTRIBUTED TO THE ERRORS OF THE POLICE.

-- "THE RECONCILIATION OF THE PEOPLE OF THE BASQUE COUNTRY WITH THE SERVANTS OF PUBLIC ORDER WILL COME ABOUT THROUGH THE APPROVAL OF THE CONSTITUTION AND WITH THE ACCELERATION OF THE TRANSFERENCE OF AUTHORITY FROM THE CENTRAL GOVT TO THE BASQUE GENERAL COUNCIL, BECAUSE I CONSIDER THAT ALL OF THE OTHER STEPS TOWARD

THE OBJECTIVE OF RECONCILIATION ALREADY HAVE BEEN  
TAKEN BY THE GOVT...ALL OF THE CRUCIAL MOMENTS OF THE  
POLITICAL TRANSITION HAVE BEEN ACCOMPANIED BY DESTABILI-  
ZATION ATTEMPTS...WE HAVE OVERCOME MANY DIFFICULT  
SITUATIONS IN THE PAST AND I AM SURE THAT WE WILL OVER-  
COME THIS ONE AS WELL."

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4. TURNING TO THE COMPLEX SUBJECT OF THE DEVOLUTION  
OF POLICE POWERS TO THE BASQUE REGIONAL GOVT AND THE  
FORMATION OF AN ETHNICALLY BASQUE POLICE FORCE IN THE  
REGION, MARTIN VILLA INDICATED THAT HE HAD DISCUSSED  
THE MATTER WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE BASQUE GENERAL  
COUNCIL A NUMBER OF TIMES. "WE MUST MOVE AHEAD IN  
THIS AREA," HE SAID. "...I UNDERSTAND PUBLIC ORDER,  
IN ITS TOTALITY, TO BE ONE OF THE SOCIAL FUNCTIONS  
OF THE STATE. I THINK THAT WHEN THEY SPEAK OF AN  
ETHNICALLY BASQUE POLICE FORCE, THEY MEAN A CORPS  
WHOSE FUNDAMENTAL TASK WOULD BE TO MAINTAIN ORDER

IN THE STREETS. BUT THE GREAT TECHNICAL SERVICES --  
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CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION, BORDER VIGILANCE AND CUSTOMS,  
FISCAL CRIMES, ETC. -- MUST REMAIN WITH THE STATE.  
WE ALREADY ARE AT WORK IN THIS AREA. THE OLD TRADITION  
OF THE ETHNIC POLICE CORPS CAN BE INCLUDED IN THE NEW  
STATUTE ON THE POLICE THAT IS BEING PREPARED."

5. CONCERNING SPECULATION THAT HE HAD BEEN OR MIGHT  
BE ASKED TO RESIGN, MARTIN VILLA TOLD REPORTERS AFTER  
THE PRESS CONFERENCE THAT "I ALWAYS HAVE MY RESIGNATION  
SUBMITTED, BUT I WITHDRAW IT WHEN THERE ARE GRAV  
PROBLEMS." HE LATER ADDED THAT HE ENJOYED THE FULL  
SUPPORT OF PRIME MINISTER SUAREZ.

6. MEANWHILE, THE OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL OF  
THE ARMED POLICE HAS ISSUED AN OFFICIAL STATEMENT  
ANNOUNCING THE IMMEDIATE REPLACEMENT OF THE COMMANDERS  
OF THE ARMED POLICE IN PAMPLONA AND SAN SEBASTIAN.  
THE NOTE ALSO REPORTS THE FIRING OF THE CAPTAIN IN  
CHARGE OF THE COMPANY OF ARMED POLICE THAT VANDALIZED  
RENTERIA, AND THE RETURN OF THE UNIT TO ITS BASE AT  
MIRANDA DEL EBRO, SOUTH OF THE BASQUE REGION.

7. COMMENT: THE RENTERIA VANDALISM IS ONE OF THE MOST  
SERIOUS BREACHES OF DISCIPLINE ON THE PART OF AN ARMED  
POLICE UNIT OF WHICH WE ARE AWARE, AND IT DEMONSTRATES  
TO THE GOVT THAT CONTINUING BASQUE PUBLIC ORDER PROBLEMS  
THREATEN NOT ONLY A BASIC POLITICAL UNDERSTANDING WITH  
THE BASQUES, BUT ALSO THE PROFESSIONALISM OF THE NATIONAL  
POLICE. MARTIN VILLA'S MEASURED WORDS INDICATE THAT  
HE HAS RECEIVED THE MESSAGE CLEARLY, HIS STATEMENT ON  
THE "ACCELERATION" OF TRANSFERENCES TO THE BASQUE RE-  
GIONAL GOVT AND THE FORMATION OF AN ETHNICALLY BASQUE  
POLICE BEING THE MOST EXPLICIT WE HAVE YET HEARD FROM  
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HIM OR ANY OTHER CABINET MINISTER. THE MODALITIES AND  
SUBSTANCE OF SUCH STEPS WILL BE NO EASY MATTER TO WORK  
OUT, HOWEVER, GIVEN THE IMPORTANT DIFFERENCES THAT SEPA-  
RATE THE GOVT AND THE BASQUE PNV IN THESE AREAS,  
RESISTANCE WITHIN THE MILITARY AND PUBLIC ORDER FORCES  
TO SUCH MEASURES, AND THE GOVT'S SENSITIVITY TO ANY  
APPEARANCE OF BUCKLING UNDER TO STREET PRESSURES.  
TODMAN

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## Message Attributes

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**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
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**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 14 jul 1978  
**Decaption Date:** 01 jan 1960  
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**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
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